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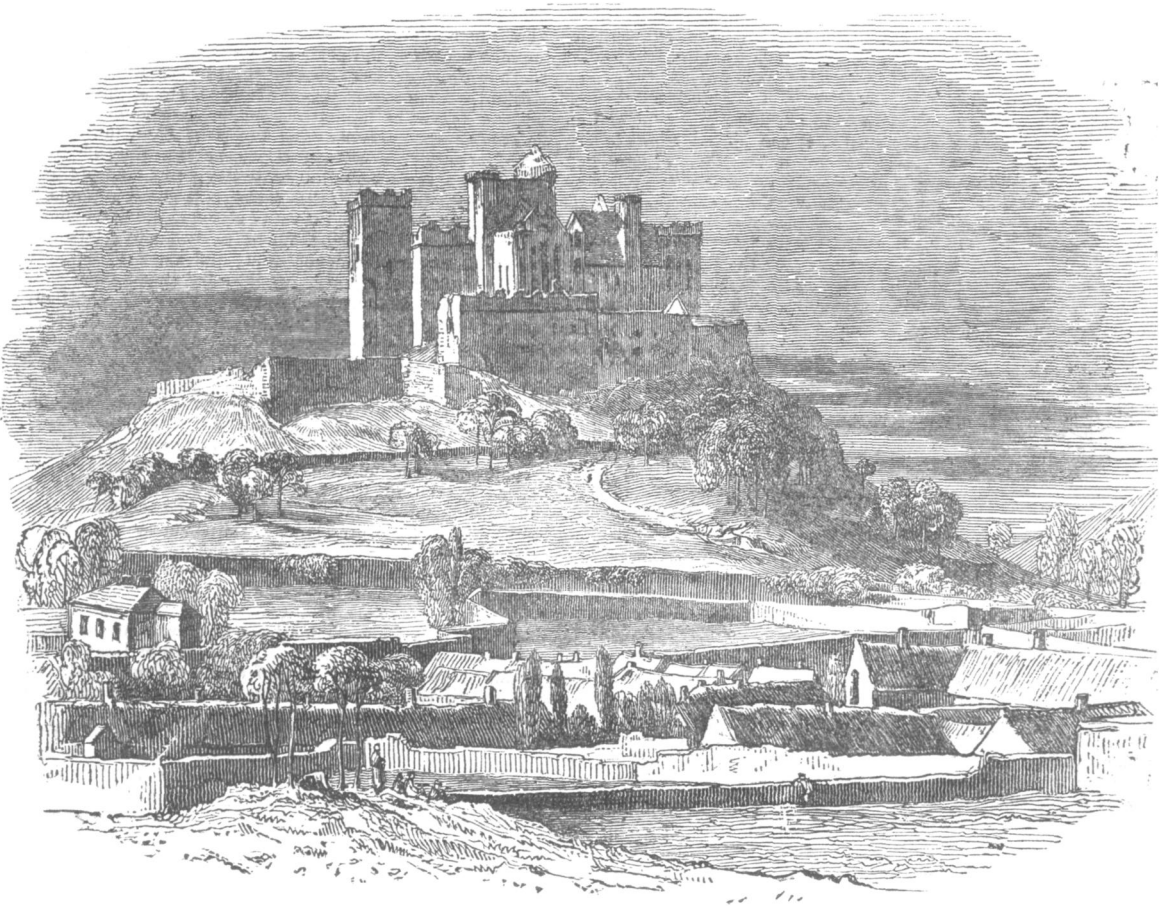
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VOLUME I.



THE ROCK OF CASHEL, AS SEEN FROM THE SOUTH.

To such of our readers as have not had the good fortune to see the ancient metropolis of Munster, our prefixed illustration will, it is hoped, give some general idea of the situation and grandeur of a group of ruins, which on various accounts claim to rank as the most interesting in the British islands. Ancient buildings of greater extent and higher architectural splendour may indeed be found elsewhere; but in no other spot in the empire can there be seen congregated together so many structures of such different characters and uses, and of such separate and remote ages; their imposing effect being strikingly heightened by the singularity and grandeur of their situation, and the absence from about them of any objects that might destroy the associations they are so well calculated to excite. To give an adequate idea, however, of this magnificent architectural assemblage, would require not one, but a series of views, from its various surrounding sides. These we shall probably furnish in the course of our future numbers; and in the mean time we may state, that the buildings of which it is composed are the following:—

1st, An Ecclesiastical Round Tower, in perfect preservation.

2d, Cormac's Chapel, a small stone-roofed church, with

two side-towers, in the Norman style of the eleventh and twelfth centuries—also in good preservation.

3d, A Cathedral, with nave, choir, and transepts, in the pointed style of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, now in ruins, but which was originally only second in extent and the magnificence of its architecture to the cathedrals in our own metropolis.

4th, A strong Castle, which served as the palace of the Archbishops of Cashel.

5th, The Vicar's Hall, and the mansions of the inferior ecclesiastical officers of the Cathedral, which are also in ruins.

If, then, the reader will picture to himself such a group of buildings, standing in solitary grandeur on a lofty, isolated, and on some sides precipitous rock, in the midst of the green luxuriant plains of "the Golden Vale," he may be able to form some idea of the various aspects of sublimity and picturesqueness which it is so well calculated to assume, and of the exciting interest it must necessarily create even in minds of the lowest degree of intellectuality. Viewed from any point, it is, indeed, such a scene as, once beheld, would impress itself on the memory for ever.

It would appear from our ancient histories that the Rock

of Cashel was the site of the regal fortress of the Kings of Munster, from ages anterior to the preaching of the gospel in Ireland; and it is stated in the ancient lives of our patron Saint, that the monarch Éngus, the son of Nathfraoich, was here converted, with his family, and the nobles of Munster, by St Patrick in the fifth century. It would appear also from the same authorities, that at this period there was a Pagan temple within the fortress, which the Irish apostle destroyed; and though it is nowhere distinctly stated, as far as we are able to discover, that a Christian church was founded on its site in that age, the fact that it was so, may fairly be inferred from the statement in the Tripartite Life of the Saint, in which it is stated that no less than seventeen kings, descended from Éngus and his brother Oilioil, being ordained monks, reigned at Cashel, from the time of St Patrick to the reign of Cinnegeoghan, who, according to the Annals of Innisfallen, was deposed in the year 901, Cormac MacCuilleanan being set up in his place. However this may be, it can hardly admit of doubt that a church was erected, if not at that time, at least some centuries afterwards, as appears from the existing round tower, which is unquestionably of an age considerably anterior to any of the other structures now remaining. It is said, indeed, and popularly believed, that a cathedral church was erected here in the ninth century by the King-Bishop Cormac MacCuilleanan; and if we had historical authority for this supposition, we might conclude, with every probability, that the round tower was of that age. But no such evidence has been found, and Cashel is only noticed in our annals as a regal residence of the Munster kings, till the beginning of the twelfth century, when, at the year 1101, it is stated in the Annals of the Four Masters, that "a convocation of the people of Leoth Mogha, or the southern half of Ireland, was held at Cashel, at which Murtough O'Brien, with the nobles of the laity and clergy, and O'Dunan, the illustrious bishop and chief senior of Ireland, attended, and on which occasion Murtough O'Brien made such an offering as king never made before him, namely, Cashel of the Kings, which he bestowed on the devout, without the intervention of a laic or an ecclesiastic, but for the use of the religious of Ireland in general." The successor of this monarch, Cormac MacCarthy, being deposed in 1127, as stated in the Annals of Innisfallen, commenced the erection of the church, now popularly called "Cormac's Chapel." He was, however, soon afterwards restored to his throne, and on the completion of this church it was consecrated in 1134. This event is recorded by all our ancient annalists in nearly the following words:—

"1134. The church built by Cormac MacCarthy at Cashel was consecrated this year by the archbishop and bishops of Munster, at which ceremony the nobility of Ireland, both clergy and laity, were present."

It can scarcely be doubted that this was the finest architectural work hitherto erected in Ireland, but its proportions were small; and when, in 1152, the archbishopric of Munster was fixed at Cashel by Cardinal John Paparo, the papal legate, it became necessary to provide a church of greater amplitude. The present cathedral was in consequence erected by Donald O'Brien, King of Limerick, and endowed with ample provisions in lands, and the older church was converted into a chapel, or chapter-house.

But though the present ruined cathedral claims this very early antiquity, its existing architectural features chiefly belong to a later age—namely, the commencement of the fifteenth century, when, as appears from Wares's Antiquities, the cathedral was rebuilt by the archbishop, Richard O'Hedian, or at least repaired, from a very ruinous condition in which it then was. The Vicar's Hall, &c. was also erected by this prelate; and it is not improbable that the castle was erected, or at least re-edified, at the same period. It would appear, however, to have been repaired as late as the sixteenth century, from the shields bearing the arms of Fitzgerald and Butler, which are sculptured on it—prelates of these names having governed the see in succession in the early half of that century.

The interior of the cathedral is crowded with monuments of considerable antiquity; and the tomb of Cormac MacCarthy is to be seen on one side of the north porch, at the entrance to his chapel. It was opened above a century since, and a pastoral staff, of exquisite beauty, and corresponding in style with the ornaments of the chapel, was extracted from it. It is now in the possession of Mr Petrie. The cemetery contains no monument of any considerable age; but on the south side there is a splendid but greatly dilapidated stone cross, which, there can be no doubt, belongs to the twelfth century.

To give any detailed description of the architectural features of these various edifices, would extend beyond the space prescribed by the limits of our little Journal for a single paper; yet, as some description will be expected of us, we shall briefly state a few particulars.

The round tower—the more ancient remain upon the Rock—is fifty-six feet in circumference and ninety feet in height; it contains five stories, has four apertures at top, and has its doorway twelve feet from the ground.

Cormac's Chapel consists of a nave and choir, but has neither transepts nor lateral aisles. It is richly decorated in the Norman style of the time, both exteriorly and interiorly; and the entire length of the building is fifty-three feet. There are crypts between the arches of the choir and nave and the stone roof; and there is a square tower on each side of the building, at the junction of the nave and choir. Taken as a whole, there is no specimen of its kind in the British empire so perfect or curious.

The cathedral, as already stated, consists of a choir, nave, and transepts, with a square tower in the centre. The greatest length, from east to west, is about two hundred and ten feet, and the breadth in the transepts is about a hundred and seventy feet. There are no side aisles, and the windows are of the lancet form, usual in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A century has not yet elapsed since this magnificent pile was doomed to destruction, and that by one who should have been its most zealous preserver. Archbishop Price, who succeeded to this see in 1744, and died in 1752, not being able, as tradition states, to drive in his carriage up the steep ascent to the church door, procured an act of parliament to remove the cathedral from the Rock of Cashel into the town, on which the roof was taken off for the value of the lead, and the venerable pile was abandoned to ruin!

Of the remarkable historical events connected with these ruins, our space will only permit us to state, that in 1495 the cathedral was burned by Gerald, the eighth Earl of Kildare; for which act, being accused before the king, his excuse was, that it was true, but that he would not have done so but that he had supposed the archbishop was in it; and his candour was rewarded with the chief governorship of Ireland!

In 1647, the cathedral—being filled with a vast number of persons, many of whom were ecclesiastics, who had fled thither for refuge and protection, a strong garrison having been placed in it by Lord Taaffe—was taken by storm by the Lord Inchiquin, with a considerable slaughter of the garrison and citizens, including twenty ecclesiastics. It was again taken by Cromwell in the year 1649.

In conclusion, we shall only remark, that the venerable group of ruins of which we have attempted this slight sketch, considered as an object of interest to pleasure tourists, and those of our own country in particular, have not as yet been sufficiently appreciated; and that, as Sir Walter Scott truly remarked, though the scenery of our lakes and mountains may be rivalled in many parts of the sister islands, there is nothing of their class, viewed as a whole, comparable in interest with the ruins on the Rock of Cashel. P.

POETICAL PROPHECY OF BISHOP BERKELEY.—To our illustrious countryman, Bishop Berkeley, may be with justice applied what he himself says of his favourite, Plato, that "he has joined with an imagination the most splendid and magnificent, an intellect fully as deep and clear." A morsel of poetry from such a writer ought to be preserved as a literary curiosity, and as a proof of the great variety of his talents; but when we consider that the following was written almost in a prophetic spirit, more than a century ago, and consequently long before the events to which he seems to allude could well have been anticipated, it has an additional claim upon our notice.

"AMERICA, 1730.

There shall be sung another golden age,
The rise of empires and of arts.
The good and great inspiring epic age,
The wisest heads and noblest hearts.

Not such as EUROPE breeds in her decay;
Such as she bred when fresh and young,
When heavenly flame did animate her clay,
By future poets shall be sung.

Westward the course of empire bends its way—
The four first acts already past,
A fifth shall close the drama and the day;
Time's noblest offspring is the last."